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STATE FOR SCA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SCA/A, S/CRS, S/CT,
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: DEFENSE MINISTER WARDAK ON
IRAN AND PAKISTAN

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Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Carol Rodley for reasons
1.4 (b) (d)

11. (S) In a separate meeting with members of the Strategic Partnership delegation, Minister of Defense Wardak stressed the importance to Afghanistan of its partnership with the United States, and praised U.S. forces for the "marvelous job" they are doing in Afghanistan. He noted in particular the cooperation between Afghan National Army and U.S. Special Forces in Operation Medusa as having "maximum effectiveness." "Truly," he said, "Afghan and U.S. forces are a band of brothers."

12. (S) The discussion covered the following topics:

- Funding issues: Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Edelman remarked that while there is widespread support for funding U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, there remain persistent questions on the Hill about corruption touching both the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior. He said that Minister Wardak is a positive spokesman for good governance, and urged him to be prepared to brief Members of Congress on what steps have been taken to counter corruption. Wardak replied by saying that while corruption has not been eliminated from the Ministry of Defense, there have been significant improvements due in part to the assistance of U.S. mentor teams. He said that compared to other institutions in Afghanistan he believes that the Ministry of Defense is one of the most advanced in implementing anti-corruption measures. He noted that a Code of Military Justice is in place and the Afghan National Army is subject to continuous inspections by an Inspector General.

- NATO: USDP Edelman noted that Minister Wardak,s

intervention has been instrumental in energizing NATO colleagues and other international partners. Ambassador Nuland remarked on the value of Minister Wardak,s visits to NATO and said that her colleagues are all impressed by the bravery of Afghan soldiers. She also noted the value of his interaction with the European media. Wardak replied that he continues to engage actively with NATO and non-NATO partners regarding both equipment and troop deployments.

- Iran: After a short presentation by USDP Edelman on U.S. concerns regarding Iran, Minister Wardak said that the Government of Afghanistan is seeing more Iranian activity in Afghanistan as well as more cooperation between Iran and Pakistan with regard to the Taliban. He said that the Iranians have recently begun running courses in improvised explosive devices, and they are looking for recruits and meeting with insurgent commanders. He added that during the previous Eid holiday, Taliban members en route to Islamic holy places in the Middle East were allowed to transit through Iran. He also pointed out that Nimroz Province is particularly vulnerable to Iranian exploitation due to the fact that there are no Afghan security forces stationed there. He concluded by saying that the Afghan government has not raised any of these concerns with Iran, which in any case would not be his role but rather that of the National Security Advisor or Minister of Foreign Affairs, because the Afghan leadership does not want a war on two fronts.

- Pakistan: In advance of his trip to Islamabad, Assistant Secretary Boucher asked for Minister Wardak,s view of Pakistan-Afghanistan relations, noting that the U.S. believes that Pakistan has been

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doing some good things recently and we want to support and encourage them in getting government control over actions occurring on their territory. Wardak replied by saying that Afghanistan does not want to make things difficult for the U.S. and Pakistan. All ministers have been instructed by President Karzai that if the Pakistanis cooperate, they will do so in return. However, Wardak once again expressed his skepticism regarding Pakistan,s intentions. He said that Afghan intelligence has indicated that the recent arrests of Mullahs Osmani and Obaidullah both occurred because those individuals had had a falling out with Mullah Omar and therefore Omar wanted them removed from the Taliban leadership and used the Pakistanis to do so. He said that the Government of Afghanistan has agents embedded in the Taliban whose salaries, paid by the Pakistanis, have recently doubled. He emphasized that the information regarding official Pakistani support for the Taliban is coming from many sources and from people who are in a position to know. Nevertheless he emphasized that the Government of Afghanistan will not stand in the way of U.S. efforts to work with Pakistan.

- Hekmatyar: The delegation asked Wardak for his assessment of the statement by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar that he had broken with the Taliban. Wardak replied that while he had no specific information, he interpreted the statement as meaning that "Hekmatyar,s masters think he will be more useful" in Afghanistan, or else "elements here are trying to strengthen their hand" by facilitating some sort of reconciliation.

13. (S) Comment: Wardak,s skepticism regarding Pakistan,s intentions is nothing new. His concerns about Iranian activity, however, appear to reflect a growing appreciation of how deeply involved Iran has become in Afghanistan, and how Afghanistan could be

caught in the middle of any confrontation between Iran and the United States. In particular, he quoted a recent statement by the Iranians that "they could make things much worse" in Afghanistan if they chose.

14. (U) The delegation has cleared this cable.
NORLAND